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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0588
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2018

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: UNDP PULLS PLUG ON TURKMEN TRIP TO
GENEVA TO OBSERVE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

REF: ASHGABAT 0433

Classified By: CDA RICHARD E. HOAGLAND: 1.4 (B), (B).

11. (C) UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Inita Paulovica told EmbOff April 10 that UNDP had canceled a planned trip to Geneva for two Turkmen officials to observe the first Universal Periodic Review (reftel). The two had intended to use the trip to help Turkmenistan prepare its own document for the review in December. Paulovica said UNDP, which was funding the trip, was angry that two lower-level officials, instead of Institute of Democracy and Human Rights Chair Shirin Ahmedova were chosen to go. Moreover, the pair had planned only to observe the session and not participate in side meetings or other opportunities to discuss issues informally with other attendees. Paulovica said UNDP feels that the informal discussions would be the most useful and eye-opening for the Turkmen.

12. (C) Since the planned itinerary of the travelers only included session attendance, Paulovica said UNDP decided to use "tough love." She canceled the trip and suggested that they consider going to the next review (in a few months) instead.

13. (C) COMMENT: While we do not fault UNDP for wanting to get its money's worth from the trip, we think they may have been a little short-sighted. Ahmedova is extremely busy with the work of the Institute and her many foreign partners. It is unreasonable to assume that she has a lot of time to travel. In addition, just getting the officials to Geneva, meeting counterparts from other countries, and observing the goings on would be beneficial. It is more than likely they would have found opportunities to informally chat with others, once they were on the ground. It just might have been more difficult to get interagency approval for the side meetings beforehand. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND